

REMARKS

Claims 5-9, 11-14, 15 and 19-26 are pending. The Examiner rejects claims 5-8 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hilston et al. (WO 97/31605) in view of Suenaga et al. (EP 826354). Claim 9 is rejected as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hilston in view of Suenaga and further in view of Roe et al. (U.S. 5,554,145). Claim 15 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hilston in view of Suenaga and further in view of Anspach (FR 2750319).

Applicant has amended claims 5 and 19. Applicant thankfully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 11-13 and 19-26 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims and independent claims 80, 86 and 92 have been added to recite this allowable subject matter.

Applicant has amended independent claim 5 to clearly recite, *inter alia*, continuously molding a sheet-form base having a multiplicity of fastener elements while continuously molding a non-planar undulation in which the base extends out of its plane to form a peak. Because the cited references fail to disclose or fairly suggest, individually or in combination, the method as claimed, Applicant respectfully requests claim 5 be allowed.

The invention as recited in claim 5 is an improvement on continuous fastener product forming methods, such as those described by Suenaga, in which fastener elements, or the stems of fastener elements, are molded in discrete cavities extending from the surface of a molding roll, for example. It is well-known in the art that such a method for forming male fastener products, while extremely cost effective, is also very sensitive to variations in molding parameters that can effect proper stem formation, cooling, and extraction. Resin flow rates, temperatures and pressures must be maintained at proper levels in the molding region to form useful fastener element stems. It is therefore common, when fastener elements are to be provided on a product with other structural features, to mold the array of fastener element stems on a base, and then secure the molded base to something incorporating the other desired structural features.

In view of the prior art of record, Applicant appears to be the first to see the potential viability of modifying known fastener stem molding methods to mold a non-planar undulation in

the base while molding the fastener element stems. Applicant's claim 5 requires "continuously molding a non-planar undulation in which the base extends out of its plane to form a peak that extends along a longitudinal direction of said base." This is done while "continuously molding a sheet-form base having a multiplicity of molded fastener element stem portions extending integrally from the sheet-form base in a fastening section of the base lying generally in a plane." As the Examiner has already noted, this is clearly an improvement over Suenaga.

Hilston makes no suggestion for improving a continuous molding method, and in fact makes no reference to forming any structure by a continuous molding method. Rather, Hilston simply shows a belt that he says can be "molded or stamped." Given the non-continuous nature of the several features of his belt, Applicant submits that those of ordinary skill in this art would take Hilston's reference to molding to imply an injection molding method, where resin is injected under pressure into a closed, stationary die defining the desired structural features. There is no indication in Hilston that any single feature, much less his "corrugations 46" may be continuously molded. Furthermore, Hilston provides no teaching that would lead someone of ordinary skill to attempt a modification of continuous fastener element stem array molding methods and apparatus.

Applicant repeats by reference the arguments set forth in the Response filed October 17, 2002.

In light of the above remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that all rejections be withdrawn. The undersigned attorney would appreciate an opportunity to address any remaining issues via telephone, at the Examiner's convenience.